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GENEVA FOR RMA
DEPT FOR PRM/ANE AND PRM/A; EAP/MLS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2019
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [TH](#) [LA](#)
SUBJECT: LAO HMONG: AMBASSADOR PUSHES THAI FM ON NO FORCED
RETURNS, BUT FM MAKES CLEAR THAI MOVING FORWARD

REF: A. STATE 122622
[1](#)B. VIENTIANE 553

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador, in a meeting with Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya the evening of December 1 at the Foreign Ministry, stressed that the Thai government should not forcibly repatriate Lao Hmong at Phetchabun and Nong Khai, per Ref A. Recalling Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's assurances to Secretary Clinton in July that there would be no forced returns, the Ambassador stressed to Kasit that U.S. would take a forced return very seriously, particularly considering that the Hmong at Nong Khai had been recognized by the UNHCR as being in need of protection and that the RTG had made its own determination that some of those at Phetchabun were in need of protection. Kasit responded that the RTG was cognizant of the USG position.

[1](#)2. (C) Kasit told the Ambassador that Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters Director of Border Affairs Lieutenant General Nipat Thonglek had earlier on December 1 met his Lao counterpart in order to maintain close cooperation as the two governments planned for the return of the Hmong. While a schedule to send back those at Phetchabun and Nong Khai had not yet been fixed, the Foreign Minister would travel with PM Abhisit to Vientiane December 9 for a visit expected to further bilateral planning on the Hmong issue (Note: We believe the visit is connected to the start of the Southeast Asian Games).

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador emphasized to Kasit the need to share with the U.S. the list of those at the Phetchabun camp who had been screened-in by the RTG. Sharing the list would go far in facilitating the safety of those at Phetchabun if they were returned to Laos.

[1](#)4. (C) Note: LTG Nipat confirmed his meeting with his Lao counterpart in Udorn in a late December 1 evening telcon with PolCouns. Nipat indicated that the Thai would "abide by the commitments previously made in meetings between the Thai and Lao Prime Ministers." Intimating that a final resolution of the status of the Phetchabun Hmong was imminent, Nipat said that there would likely be an interagency Thai meeting late on December 2 or early December 3 to agree on the way forward, and that he would be willing to talk to us again after that meeting. PolCouns reiterated to Nipat our standing request for the list of Hmong the RTG had screened-in; Nipat demurred, but suggested the Lao had expressed a willingness to cooperate with the U.S. on persons of concern. We will take Nipat up on his offer to meet later

in the week. End note.

15. (C) Comment: Given Ref B indication that the GOL is willing to work with us on the proposal for the return of the Nong Khai group, we should consider whether it makes sense for the USG to encourage the RTG to go slow on the return of that group while we (reluctantly) accept that the Phetchabun train is leaving the station. End comment.
JOHN